

programs designed to inform civil servants of the expectations and rules they must abide by; mechanisms to provide advice and counseling to civil servants on the application of ethics rules; employee protections for whistleblowing and unfair administrative practices; fair and impartial personnel systems that enforce merit hiring and proper wages; and administrative systems with appropriate staffing levels to support all of these functions.

OGE Activities Abroad

U.S. foreign policy agencies and various multinational and nongovernmental organizations regularly invite OGE to participate in anticorruption programs abroad. These programs generally focus on issues related to the rule of law and methods for controlling corruption. OGE is most often asked to contribute its experience with designing and operating financial disclosure systems and codes of conduct.

OGE has provided programs and consultations for the United Nations, the World Bank and the Council of Europe, nongovernmental organizations such as the National Democratic Institute (NDI), in addition to Federal departments, including the Departments of State, Treasury, and Commerce, and agencies such as the Agency for International Development (AID) and USIA.

Consultations and Presentations in Other Countries

OGE regularly sends senior staff members to speak at anticorruption conferences and seminars. At such events, OGE representatives frequently serve as the primary experts on systems and strategies for preventing corruption. OGE views such opportunities as valuable means of engaging a broad audience on the importance of preventive systems as a vital element of an anticorruption program.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES

- ◆ OGE has signed a MOU with the National Office of Public Ethics of Argentina, in which OGE made commitments to support the development of the Argentine ethics office.
- ◆ OGE played a central role in helping the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) create an Ethics Checklist, a measurement tool which allows member countries to evaluate their public service ethics systems in a coordinated and consistent manner.
- ◆ OGE helped draft the InterAmerican Convention Against Corruption and participates in the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the Convention.

- ◆ OGE participated in the development of and signed off on the Lima Declaration, an important statement of anticorruption principles and best practices.
- ◆ OGE has been requested by the World Bank to review the implementation of anticorruption strategies.
- ◆ OGE sent a senior level delegation to Cairo, Egypt to provide technical briefings and assistance to the Administrative Control Authority (ACA) of the Egyptian Government.
- ◆ An OGE staff member served as a featured member of a USIA- sponsored speakers' program held in various cities throughout China on the subject of anticorruption and rule of law reforms.

For further information, please write or contact:

U.S. Office of Government Ethics
1201 New York Avenue, NW.
Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005-3917
Telephone: 202-208-8000
Fax: 202-208-8037
Internet: <http://www.usoge.gov>

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Government
Ethics



INTERNATIONAL
GOVERNMENT
ETHICS
INITIATIVE



Corruption is the single greatest threat to modern democracy. It perverts public policy, electoral politics and public administration. Corruption distorts national economies, discouraging effective free markets and leading to inferior goods and services. Ultimately, corruption undermines the very foundations of democratic government.

Modern legal professionals and experts in public administration know how to construct systems to control corruption. This is evident in international protocols of the United Nations, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), as well as efforts by the Council of Europe and the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

Elements that these specialists agree are essential in combating corruption are codes of conduct, effective criminal conflict of interest laws, transparency systems, education and counseling systems, and effective implementation through independent administrative structures. The United States Office of Government Ethics (OGE) is responsible for administering these elements in the executive branch of the Government of the United States.

At the request of the foreign policy-making agencies of the Federal Government, OGE has taken a proactive role in aiding foreign governments in this critical anticorruption area. OGE has shared with foreign governments the merits of systems that prevent conflicts of interest and enhance accountability as a strategy against corruption. OGE also has lent its expertise and experience in this important area to those who request assistance in developing such strategies.

OGE’s activities in this area increased following the success of the 1994 International Conference on Ethics in Government, organized by OGE in cooperation with the U.S. Information Agency (USIA). The enthusiasm and interest shown by the conference delegates from over 50 countries for learning more about how to prevent corruption indicated that OGE had a constructive role to play in the anticorruption efforts around the world.

THE OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT ETHICS

OGE is the designated supervisory office for providing guidance on Government ethics for the executive branch, as well as the ethics programs of executive departments and agencies. OGE was established by the Ethics in Government Act of 1978 as the office responsible for preventing

conflicts of interest as a complement to the critical functions of investigating and prosecuting corruption. OGE fulfills its mission by developing and issuing the rules and regulations which involve the conflict of interest statutes, post-employment restrictions, standards of conduct, and public and confidential financial disclosure systems in the executive branch.

OGE ACTIVITIES TO ASSIST OTHER GOVERNMENTS’ ANTICORRUPTION EFFORTS

Foreign Visitor Briefings

OGE regularly receives requests from foreign governments for information about the duties and responsibilities of the Office. To accommodate these requests, OGE invites foreign delegations to visit the Office and attend an introductory briefing describing OGE’s role in managing a decentralized ethics program, followed by a discussion of the systems in place to accomplish this task. More extensive seminars are offered to high-level foreign delegations that include greater background into the development of the executive branch ethics program and a detailed discussion of OGE’s relationship with the various agencies and departments in the executive branch with ethics-related authorities.

In a typical year OGE hosts over 150 visitors from over 35 countries. OGE has welcomed delegations from Japan, Russia, Kenya, Ukraine, Hungary, Korea, Colombia, South Africa, Poland, Italy, Australia and Zimbabwe, among others.

Technical Assistance Provided to Other Countries

OGE offers technical assistance to countries that are considering ethics-related initiatives. This assistance can take a number of forms, from informal advice on appropriate strategies for country-specific problems to formal written analyses of ethics initiatives, such as draft ethics legislation or codes of conduct. In certain circumstances, OGE has established a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with a national ethics authority in order to create the framework for ongoing consultation and exchange of information.

OGE provides expertise and assistance on a variety of systems and program elements. Some of these elements include the following: financial disclosure requirements that extend to the highest levels of government and are made public; codes of conduct that delineate expectations and standards of behavior for all civil servants; education

